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METHODS OF CITY EVANGELIZATION.

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WE approach a most interesting and perplexing subject. It is the problem of "City Evangelization," and the methods of conducting this important work. In discussing the subject we are at once aware of the fact that methods are only a means to an end. The thing aimed at is the evangelization of a city, and various methods are employed in order that this result may be secured. Methods are of no value in and of themselves; they are of value only for what they accomplish. The best methods are the methods which secure the most satisfactory results. The selection of methods will depend upon the conditions which prevail. Sometimes one method will be employed to accomplish a certain result, and sometimes another method to accomplish the same result. The conditions were different; the first method was better at one time, and the second method at another time. Methods vary; the problem which requires the methods for its solution remains unchanged.

It is not well, therefore, to be wedded to method, unless we are willing to invite failure. There are people who adore method; who have one way for doing a certain work, and only one way. If it cannot be done in that one way, it must not be done at all. Their method may have been very successful at a certain time; it may have great antiquity as its commendation; it may have been employed by many very good and very wise men; it may have nothing objectionable in its principle of action; but it may not be the best method for accomplishing results at the present time; and if this is true, it ought to be discarded and a better method employed.

Let us take an illustration drawn from the subject under

PAUL'S OBLIGATIONS TO MISSIONARY EFFORT AND THE WAY IN WHICH HE MET THEM.

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"For I am a debtor both to the Greeks and also to the Barbarians; both to the wise and also to the unwise."—ROM. I. 14.

IN these words Paul professes the sense of an obligation the like to which many professing Christians seem never to feel. He professes the sense of an obligation to impart the gospel to all peoples and to all classes of all peoples.

He owes the giving of the gospel to them. The words preceding our text, and the words following it, make it clear that the thing owed—the thing he has in mind when he says, "I am a debtor"—is the giving of the gospel. Before penning the text, he wrote to the Roman Christians that he had longed to see them, that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift to the end that they might be established, that he and they might be comforted together, by the mutual faith both of them and him; and that he had longed to have some fruits among them also, even as among other Gentiles. Having uttered the text, he writes, "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are in Rome also." Hence, some of the best commentators, as Drs. Hodge and Shedd, supply the word *evangelisasthai*—which means to preach the gospel—after the word debtor. I am a debtor to preach the gospel; or, I am under obligation to preach the gospel both to the Greeks, and also to the barbarians.

When Paul declares his obligation to preach the gospel to the Greeks, and also to the barbarians, he makes a division of peoples, for the purpose of including all, that was common amongst the Greeks of the classic age. The Eleatic stranger in Plato's Statesman says, "In this part of the world, they cut off the Greeks as one species, and all the other species of mankind they

include under the single name of 'barbarians.'" Paul is under obligations to preach the gospel to all peoples according to opportunity, to the Greeks and to the not-Greeks. He is to preach also to the wise, to those who are cultured and learned; and he is to preach to the unwise, to the simple, to those who are without culture and without learning. He is to preach to all peoples; he is to preach to the wise of all peoples, and the unwise of all peoples, to preach to all classes of all peoples. In short, he professes, here, his obligation to give the gospel to all the world as far as opportunity offers.

It ought to be a profitable thing for us, my brethren, to consider the grounds of this obligation which Paul professes as resting on him; to consider how he responded to it; to raise the question as to whether a similar obligation rests upon us; and, if that be true, to consider the further question, as to how we are responding to the obligation resting upon us.

I. *In the first place, then, let us note the grounds on which Paul had a right to conclude that he was under obligation to give the gospel to all the world, according to the abilities and opportunities given him.*

We remark, 1. *That Paul was his brother's keeper, and was, accordingly, under an obligation to work for the increased well-being of all men.* The law which has been expressed, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," was concreated in the heart of man. Had God never said to man, in word, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," it would still have been man's duty to love his fellow-man, to be his brother's keeper. Had Paul known neither gospel nor law, it would have been his duty to share his good things, of whatever sorts, with those who had them not. His fellow-men were God's creatures as well as he. With them, as God's creatures, he, God's creature and the son of his love, must share the greater riches God had given him. He must serve God through serving his creatures. The more valuable the gift to him, the greater his obligation to share it with his fellows, and thus give them occasion for gratitude and devotion to their common creator and providential ruler. Give him the gospel, and in the *absence* of the express command to be his brother's keeper, and, hence, to carry the gospel wherever he is found, the world over, it is his duty to carry his brother-man that gospel. As his brother's keeper, Paul was bound to share

it with every accessible brother; he was bound to try to secure access to the remote and thitherto inaccessible, and to share it with them, up to the limit of his powers and opportunities. It was his duty to declare the glory of God's grace to his brother as exhibited in the gospel; his duty to open the way for that brother's fuller appreciation of, and higher service of, God; his duty to give that brother a chance to secure a nobler well-being, and to evolve himself, as helped by the divine grace, into a nobler servant of God.

Let us observe that this ground of obligation *holds*, however unworthy Paul's brothers be. Suppose he knows that stoning awaits him at their hands, as at Lystra; or stripes, as at Philippi; or bonds and imprisonment, as at Rome, he is still under obligation to preach the gospel at Lystra, at Philippi and at Rome; not, it may be, under obligations to these peoples in themselves considered, but viewed as the creatures of God. He owed it to God to serve him through the serving of God's creatures who needed the service.

But this concreated law has been reinforced by its publication in the Decalogue. In that code God brought out in preceptive form the principles which were of right in force prior to their enunciation in word. On the tables of stone God fingered the eternal principles of right; and gave them the force of articulately enacted law, divinely revealed precept. To Paul, the law came not only as eternal principle, but as the revealed will of God. Hence, he felt the obligation to give the gospel to all men to be imperative.

We remark, 2. *The obligations implied in discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ, demanded of a man of Paul's gifts and opportunities that he should give himself to the work of spreading the gospel amongst all peoples and all classes.* Paul was wonderfully endowed for a propagator of any faith he should espouse. Homely in appearance, perhaps, he was yet wonderfully magnetic. He drew men to him, and bound them as with hooks of steel. He had the largeness of character that enabled him to appreciate men of all nations and climes. Appreciating others, he was himself appreciated. He had a mind to grasp with masterful ease the great principles of his religious system, to discern with logical certainty and exactness their corollaries, and to body them forth in language always of vigor and power,

sometimes of rare charm, beauty, or sublimity. If to some ears his speech appeared wanting in polish, he was nevertheless a man of broad culture and of the vastest learning. His energy of will and his power to execute his plans were Titanic.

The man of this rare combination of gifts looked forth on fields white to the harvest, to which our Saviour had pointed; he saw the fewness of the laborers, the vast extent of the field; and that there was no insuperable obstacle to his devoting himself immediately to the propagation of the Christian faith.

He knew that when Jesus saved him from the consequences of his sin, he saved him as his absolute Lord, saved him that thenceforth Paul might be his servant. Paul heartily acquiesced in this from the start: He inquired of the glorified Saviour who appeared to him on the way to Damascus, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He continued to hold that he ought to be devoted to Jesus' business. Far on in life, we hear him say that Christ "died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again." Thus, he makes the very purpose of Christ's death to be that he should win men who should take up his work and carry it on.

The disciple, in accepting the Lord, must accept him on his own terms; and ought to do it. God in Christ had bought him with his own precious blood. He had sanctified him by his own Spirit. In due time he would take him to glory. Paul had no choice but to feel that his chief duty, as a disciple of Christ, was to spread the gospel world-wide, to push forward the great cause which lay nearest the heart of the crucified Lord. Apart from any call to the apostleship, Paul must have been a religious teacher to his people and time, unless he could have done more to secure the spread of the kingdom in some other way. That way we cannot imagine.

We remark, 3. *Paul had received an open and express call to give the gospel to those who had it not, and especially to the Gentiles.* Paul's age was an extraordinary age, there was an extraordinary need, he was given an extraordinary designation to his work. Rather, he received a succession of designations. Ananias of Damascus, speaking by inspiration, had said to him, "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst know his will and see that Just One, and shouldst hear the voice

of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard" (Acts xxvi. 16-18). When Paul was come to Jerusalem, even while he prayed in the temple, he was in a trance, and saw the Lord saying unto him, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles" (Acts xxii. 21). Some years later the Holy Ghost said unto certain prophets and teachers at Antioch, as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Paul knew his kind of work in general. It had been particularly and miraculously designated to him. He had, also, specific and particular directions at times about definite portions of his work. He had no shadow of doubt as to what his work was, in general, according to God's revealed will. Often he had as little doubt about portions of that work.

Thus the moral law, and the nature of discipleship, and the express designations, in a miraculous way, laid the burden on Paul to give the gospel to all men, as God might enable him.

II. *In the second place, let us note the way in which Paul responded to the call of duty which rested on him.*¹

He preached the gospel over a wide extent of territory: Stop with Paul a moment as he labors at Tarsus. Go with him to Antioch as he is invited thither by Barnabas. Abide with him there a whole year; see him meet with the church and teach much people. Accompany him on his first missionary tour, through Cyprus, through Perga in Pamphylia, over the high passes of Mount Taurus, with its snow-clad peaks, and into the Pisidian Antioch, through Lystra and Derbe—back through all these again to great Antioch.

Attend him on his second missionary tour, through Syria and Asia Minor. Cross the strait with him into Europe, to Philippi. Pass with him through Thessalonica, through Berea, through Athens, through Corinth, and back, three or four years later, by way of Ephesus, Cæsarea and Jerusalem to Antioch.

Follow him, on his third missionary tour, to Ephesus, where he fixes, for about three years, the centre of missionary activity; then revisit with him the churches in Macedonia, and Achaia,

¹I read, years ago, a sermon of Dr. Adolph Monod on 1 Cor. xv. 10, which has given considerable color, I think, to my development of this point.

and Corinth, whence he goes to Jerusalem and to captivity, by way of Philippi, Troas, Miletus, Tyre and Cæsarea.

Go with him to Rome, whither he goes bound in chains; for, though he is bound, the gospel is not bound, and he carries the gospel with him, as he had felt he ought. Now, reflect that, after all, the Book of Acts gives us but a meagre account of the activity of Paul; and that we have followed him only partially and cursorily through the account as given in that book. Surely Paul preached the gospel over a wide field. His activity about the work of the Master was great.

But if the field was wide, if his activity was great, his plans of work were no less wise and thorough. It was his duty to give the gospel to the world. He had to preach over a wide field, but his life was short; he could be in one place only, at one time. It was his duty to set the church up where it would maintain itself and spread; his duty to look for strategic points. This he did, seeking the centres of trade, commerce and travel, whence the news of the new and wonderful religion which he preached would spread; passing by the proud and haughty university city of Athens with little effort, and giving himself to work amongst the plainer and more unsophisticated, but wide-awake and intelligent and active-minded populations of such live centres as Antioch, Corinth and Ephesus.

He did not simply scratch the ground from Jerusalem to Rome, but so preached that in many important centres great multitudes believed. We cannot follow him from place to place, showing how thorough his work was done in detail; but let us take his work at Ephesus as a sample. Let us go there in the year 45 A. D., before Paul has gotten in his work. Let us visit the great temple of Diana—one of the most splendid temples of the ancient world—one of the wonders of that world. Fix your mind, not on the temple itself as an architectural triumph, not on the spacious, lofty colonades, thrilling the beholder with beauty, but on the purpose of that temple. It is the temple of the Eastern Diana, not of the chaste huntress of the West. Nor is the many-breasted Diana the only object of worship. There are images everywhere—images of divers kinds. The temple of Diana is a sort of pantheon. Gods many are worshipped there. The temple is thronged with worshippers; and there is not a cult among them all that does not degrade.

Walk about the streets of Ephesus in this year 45 A. D. See signs everywhere of corruption. See especially how given to magic the people are. The Greeks practice magic; and even the Jews practice magic, so laden is the very atmosphere of the place. Go into the homes, see the idolatry and the fruits of idolatry in them—the fruits of the Græco-Roman civilization. You see a vast multitude of homes where the husband does not love the wife, and the wife does not love the husband; where parents care not for their children, and children are wanting in respect for their parents; where the servants are merely eye-servants, the masters and mistresses heartless tyrants. Such were many of the homes of Ephesus in 45. Such were most of them, perhaps. They were places without pure love, places often without natural affection, places without virtue.

Now, let twelve years pass; and go back to Ephesus in the year 57 A. D. Visit the temple of Diana, and see a diminished throng of worshippers. Visit the streets, and see there signs of improved citizenship. Stop beside the shrine-makers' shops; remark the fact that they have a dangerous look on their faces; hear their talk. They are mightily aroused against one Paul. One of them says to his fellows something like this: "Men, ye know that by making shrines for Diana we have our wealth. Moreover, you see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods which are made with hands; so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshipeth."

Go further, visit an humble house. It may be a private dwelling, or a little hall once used as a synagogue, or as the room of some teacher of rhetoric, or philosophy, to hold his classes in. See not only the usual signs of humble, fervent, Christian worship; but a striking incident, to our eyes, in this day's worship. Certain persons come forward and confess to the practice of magic. They bring parchments, papyri and rolls covered with mystic symbols. These have been their prized possessions. In some cases they represent bread to their owners. They had been making their livings by the use of these books. But now they make a fire of them. They burn them in the

presence of all men. Hear the members of the church remark to one another as they scatter to their homes: "Such books—books of magic—have been burned by our people here to the value of fifty thousand pieces of silver." Such was the fact.

Go with some of these Christians home. Rest there; for their home is getting to be a good place to rest in. It is a pure place, a sweet place. The husband loves his wife. He is willing to give himself for his wife. The wife honors her husband. The children reverence and obey their parents. The parents provoke not their children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Read the nineteenth of Acts. You will see that such results followed upon Paul's preaching; and you may certainly infer that Paul did all his work thoroughly.

He does this work in the face of huge obstacles. Five times he received forty stripes save one; thrice was he beaten with rods; once was he stoned; thrice did he suffer shipwreck; he was in journeyings oft, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of his own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and faithfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

Not only so, but he gave himself incessantly to fortifying the work done. Upon him, daily, was the care of all the churches. He could say, "Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?"

His epistles are all written to help strengthen Christians already won. The busiest missionary, evangelist and organizer of the apostolic age, was the most prolific writer. To the Romans he wrote to give them, in positive form, the great scheme of salvation by grace and to show them how to live in accord with it. To the Corinthians, he wrote to help them on various doctrinal questions, particularly to crush the tendency to sectarianism, there being Petrine and Pauline parties in that church; and to give them light on many practical questions: the relations of the sexes, the proprieties of worship, the way to observe the Lord's Supper, etc. To the Galatians, he writes to bring them back from an effort to rehabilitate

salvation by law, by external observances, to salvation by grace.

Paul so responded to his obligation to give the world the gospel that his work was abiding. He so firmly established the church, under the good hand of God, that it would live and propagate itself.

Go to Asia Minor in 107 A. D. Paul has been dead a good two score of years. He had done his great work there fifty years before. Read a letter that Pliny, his Roman ruler in that part of the empire, is writing to the Emperor Trajan. Pliny wishes to know what to do with the Christians. He writes that that "superstition," as he called Christianity, is spreading, not only in cities, but in villages, and even in the country; that it captivates all classes, all ages and both sexes. He says that the temples of the gods are almost forsaken, and that there is hardly any sale for sacrificial victims. He says that he is trying to stop its progress; that he has condemned some to death, and that he has sent others to the imperial tribunal. He writes that he can find nothing against these men and woman but that they worship Christ as God. He even writes that they pledge themselves by an oath not to do any evil work, to commit no thefts, robbery, nor adultery, not to break their word, nor to sacrifice property entrusted to them. That work of Paul was still bearing fruit under the good hand of God. And is it not bearing fruit till to-day? Are we not his offspring, and the offspring of his helpers in that work down to this day?

Surely, Paul acquitted himself well of his responsibilities as called to impart the gospel to all men. He preached over a wide territory, going in each place first to Jews, then the Gentiles. He planned his work so as to make it count for the most, looked out the strategic points, and planted churches in them which should take all the contiguous territory. He so preached as to have much fruit in the lives of his spiritual children. He so preached as to secure great and efficient growth of the church. He did his work in the face of tremendous difficulties; did his work so solidly that it was not evanescent, but permanent. Good ground had he for saying, late in life, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course."

III. *In the third place, let us ask whether a like obligation to that which rested on Paul does not rest on us—on you, my friends.*

We maintain that a like obligation does rest on you. You are under an obligation to be your brother's keeper—an obligation as imperative as that under which Paul labored. The moral law which says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," has been, we repeat, concreated in man as a rational and responsible being. As certainly as you are a man, so certain is it that this obligation rests on you, even apart from its special injunction upon you in the Decalogue. Moreover, as certainly as you are a man, so certain is it that the second table of the Decalogue binds you to be your brother's keeper. The only way of escaping the force of this contention is to show that you are irrational and irresponsible, like the beasts of the field, incapable of regarding yourself as God's man, by right of creation and preservation, and bound to serve him and his creatures.

Again, you are a member of the church of Christ, which he ordered with his dying breath to carry the gospel to every creature, saying: "Go ye, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." This obligation is laid by him on the church—on the body in covenant with him by baptism. It can mean nothing less than that whatsoever a man's special calling, he should regard his great business to be that of making disciples of all nations. He may be a pastor in a church as poor as that of Philippi, but he must try to push the cause of Christ to the uttermost bounds of the earth. If circumstances permit, and he can do more to forward Christ's cause by becoming an ambassador of the cross, he is under obligation—imperative obligation—to emulate Paul's work as to the very form of his life's effort.

Christians are left to-day to their own and the sanctified judgment of the church (the Spirit working through them) as to the special forms of effort which they shall make their life's effort, in carrying out the great command of the Head of the church—in answering to the obligation to impart the gospel to all the world. But the obligation is upon the church to-day, the obligation is upon *you*, church-members, as certainly as it was on the Apostle to the Gentiles, to make disciples of all nations, to lend your hand intently to this work. Nay, it is upon many unbelievers as well. Their unbelief does not free them from the obligation to be their brother's keeper. Their refusal to let Jesus reign over them does not absolve them from

the responsibility of letting him reign over them, nor from the responsibility of doing his work of giving the great riches of the gospel which he offers them to their brother-men.

No man who has ever had the gospel offered him can show himself exempt from the obligation to impart it to others according to his opportunities and abilities.

It should be remarked, further, that the obligation to missionary effort lies with very peculiar force on our age. The opportunities are vast. The doors of the heathen nations are, with one or two exceptions, wide open. The peoples in many of these nations give a relatively ready hearing to the gospel. The resources and instrumentalities of our Christian peoples are so vast—their railways, steamships, telegraphs, the protection of Christian nations over their citizens in heathen lands, and all the rich increments of nineteenth century civilization. These objective opportunities and these resources of power, place an obligation on you, my brethren, imperative, absolutely imperative.

IV. *Let me ask, in the last place, how we are measuring up to this obligation to give the gospel to all men.*

Do we show the Pauline spirit in regard to this great problem and duty? Are we reaching out to the uttermost parts of the earth to preach the gospel? Are we planning our work so as to make it count for the most? Are we looking out strategic points and planting churches in them which shall take all the contiguous territories for Christ? Are we so preaching as to have much fruit in the lives of our spiritual children, so preaching as to secure great and efficient growth of the church? Are we doing this work in spite of all the difficulties which stand in the way? God forbid that any one of us should try to roll off of his conscience the burden of his responsibility to evangelize the world and take it for Christ. It is the duty of the rank and file of Christians to see that the gospel is preached in the uttermost parts of the earth; it is the duty of the rank and file to see that the missionary work done to-day be well done—done in strategic points, whence it will spread surely, and where its influences will be as permanent as shabby human nature will permit. If the present missionaries and preachers are not carrying on the work effectively it is the duty of the rank and file to put men who can do the work aright into the ranks of mis-

sionaries and preachers, to go yourselves in many cases, or prepare your sons to go. You are debtors to the world to give it the gospel. Are you doing all that you ought, in furnishing minister and missionaries to meet squarely this obligation? If you cannot go into the work as a minister, pastor or missionary, and cannot give a son to the work, you ought to help on those who are fitted for it; and to help on all the agencies for the spread of the truth. Do you ply your vocation to acquire means to send the Lord's laborers into his harvest? Do you do your part to have the labor of these laborers well directed?

Don't answer too quickly. Do you study the great field of God earnestly and intelligently enough to know how to help on the work as your obligations demand? Do you know where the strategic points are? Do you know that your missionary leaders do? Are you trying to lift the general level of intelligence, so that adequate leaders can be produced? Is there no cause for fear that we, the rank and file, come mournfully short in this respect? Are we even awake to the opportunities at our very doors? Are we giving the gospel to those of our own immediate neighborhoods, by effort either well directed or poorly directed?

May the gracious Lord help his church to give itself to-day anew to Christ, that it may inquire, with Saul of Tarsus, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" May he make us ready to meet our heavy obligations to give the gospel to the Greek and the barbarian, to the wise and to the unwise; and all to the praise of the glory of his own grace. Amen.